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NEWMAN AND COLERIDGE

One of the Parisian daily papers recently held a voting contest to ascertain who, in popular opinion, was the most celebrated Frenchman. The result, which was overwhelmingly in favor of Pasteur, is significant in its indication of the power of scientific achievement over the modern imagination. In an age of materialism, the ability to control matter, the discovery of new chemical combinations, of new applications of electricity, are all important. Yet in 1890, at the death of Cardinal Newman, the English and American press united in extolling the one man of the century who had devoted his life, his thoughts, his transcendent literary genius, exclusively to spiritual matters. Newman, too, seemed to have captured the popular imagination. Since his death nineteen years have passed. To-day his name is still familiar, but among the majority of Catholics he is little more than an honored name; and among Protestants is regarded as a writer of admirable prose who would have been a great man had he not, from some incomprehensible reasons, abjured the faith of his father and mother. Newman is a great man because, intellectually constituted as he was, he had the courage conscientiously to follow truth as he saw it, whatever the outcome. His entire history is one of growth. His conversion was really at the age of fifteen when he became convinced of the fundamental truths of Christianity. From that year until 1845 he simply progressed.

The student of literature delights in Newman's exquisitely-modulated style, a style as marvelously coördinated and responsive to suggestion as is the nervous system of the human body, and seldom thinks of the underlying philosophy of which it is the visible expression. The ultra-Protestant thinks of the style as a cleverly constructed mask to cover essential dishonesty of mind and says with Kingsley, "What then does Dr. Newman mean?" This last is perhaps the easiest attitude with which to deal, because it admits that Newman did mean something. It is the careless attitude which exasperates; the mental sluggishness which would neglect one of the most lucid thinkers, one of

the most daring philosophers, one of the most logical reasoners, one of the most fascinating personalities of the nineteenth century. There is much in Newman to admire, much that stimulates, much to reverence. Saints are not so common in these latter days that we can afford to neglect one when he appears. And it is neglect to study his style as style, not as the visible embodiment of his thoughts.

Newman's "conversion" at the age of fifteen has never been sufficiently insisted upon as an important biographical date. "A great change of thought took place in me," he says. "I fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received intellectual impressions of dogma, which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced or obscured." This, granted the boy's temperament, was the first and most decisive step toward the Catholic Church. It was an act of faith, this reception of the fundamentals of Christianity, and on this act all Newman's future reasoning was based. His development was consistent, continuous, bold; unusually receptive of outside influences, yet extraordinarily competent in the long run to separate the true from the half-true. It was a reasoning curiously concrete, founded on two ideas: "I am what I am, or I am nothing," and recognition, in conscience, of the voice of God.

This dependence on the concrete is interesting for several reasons. It is typical of the whole Romantic Movement in literature, a reaction against the abstract philosophy of the Eighteenth Century. Wordsworth, for example, differed from Pope in that he dwelt on the specific, the concrete, the phenomena of matter as the visible expression of great spiritual truths. It was the same attitude that led him to feel in nature

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

and that led Newman to see, "in every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect—the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God." It was but another aspect of the same dependence on the concrete that made him

write, "It [Truth] has been upheld in the world, not as a system, not by argument, nor by temporal power, but by the personal influence of men who are at once the teachers and patterns of it." The theory is like Carlyle's, that the history of the world is written in the lives of its heroes. To Newman the history of the advancement of religious truth is written in personality. But to him personality does not stop with the individual. It is inherent in the visible Church, the repository of the personalities of our Lord himself and of His Apostles and Saints, as well as of their teachings. This is the reason that he came more and more to regard the Church as the vital exponent of Christianity, the active propagator of truths, of which Scripture was the proof. In the inevitably imperfect lives of saintly men, in the perfect and continuous life of the Church, he saw the argument for Christianity, the reason for its development, its far-reaching influence, its vitality — a vitality not to be found in the impersonal, written Word. This being the case, that the Church was God's representative on earth, the interpreter of God's commands, the living principle of all religion, it became imperative that he should be sure of her sanctity and of her authority. Thus there were at first years of vain endeavor to prove his own Church holy and apostolic; years during which little by little, in sorrow and amazement, he broke away from his prejudices against Rome, and replaced them with reasons in her favor.

To the average thoughtful Anglican this phase of Newman's development is difficult to follow. The English Reformation was not a shattering of dogma, nor even a break in apostolic tradition. It was rather a real reformation, a readjustment of discipline more in accord with the teachings of the Fathers. Since this reformation the Anglican Church appears to them to have been the real bulwark of primitive faith, upraised against the pervasions of that faith in the Roman Church. Of this Newman in the end lost sight in his search for infallible personality in the Church corporate. We must remember, moreover, that the most serious changes in doctrine have occurred since 1845 when Newman entered the Roman Church. As a Catholic he opposed bitterly the promulga-

tion of the doctrine of papal infallibility which the Modernists so aptly term "the acme of Protestantism," because it is the supreme example of dependence in individual belief. It would be an interesting but fruitless speculation as to whether Newman, to-day, would have taken the final step.

It is a commonplace of Protestant criticism that had Newman read contemporary German philosophy he would never have become a Catholic, a criticism for many reasons peculiarly inept. His mind was of far too concrete a nature to be seduced by the metaphysical wire-drawing of the German romantics; his feelings were too thoroughly under the control of his reason to allow a sensuous appeal to induce action of which reason did not approve. Most of the German romantics became Catholics, but they became so for æsthetic reasons, because to them the Catholic Church was mediæval, and of such conversion—as we see in "Loss and Gain,"—Newman had thorough contempt. Yet this same German philosophy acting on a purely English and reasonable mind was not as antagonistic to really spiritual religion as the somewhat erratic expounders of the might-have-been would have us believe. True it is, that in the case of Carlyle, the German influence, especially that of Goethe, led to violent expression against all forms of dogmatic religion, although not against faith. Carlyle could define better the things he hated than the things he approved. He was destructive where Newman was constructive. But, what is most important, his mind was of a totally different constitution from Newman's and, granted the same influences, the result would have been inevitably dissimilar, as the same light, acting on different chemical substances, produces different colors. In their processes of thought, in the respect they paid to the development of the "illative sense," of unconscious imaginative reasoning, they were strangely alike; in their conclusions not strangely opposed.

One other Englishman, however, was as deeply imbued with German philosophy as was Carlyle; a man, moreover, of a more speculative mind, who in the very arms of this philosophy grew out of Unitarianism into full sympathy with the Anglican position, into enthusiastic acceptance of dogma

and tradition. The parallel between Newman and Coleridge is a far more real one. Coleridge, to be sure, never became a Catholic, but it was on the catholicity of the Anglican Church that he based his hope of salvation. It would be a bold statement to say that he would finally have followed Newman; but surely, when we consider that under the influence of German speculation he progressed as far as he did, and that by many he is considered the source of the Oxford Movement itself, it is still bolder to assert that similar reading would have held Newman back.

Subject to such widely different influences the fact that the methods of thought of Coleridge and Newman were so similar is simply a sign that they were both in harmony with the intellectual tendencies of their time, those tendencies being different developments of romantic idealism. Had not Newman said definitely "I never read Coleridge," the striking parallelisms in thought would make us think that Newman was a student of the older man. Coleridge, for example, in speaking of the Protestant idea of "conversion," points out the dangers of purely emotional acceptance of faith, insists that true faith usually comes gradually as difficulties are pruned away, that it acts like the magnetic needle which points more and more steadily to the pole as disturbing causes are removed. And in this growth the "crutches" furnished by good deeds are needed to lead the invalid sinner to the "perfect health" of belief. So in an early sermon Newman speaks of repentant sinners who "are gradually and almost without sensible effort on their part, imbued in all their heart, soul, and strength with that true heavenly life which will last forever." "One secret act of self-denial, one sacrifice of inclination to duty, is worth all the mere good thoughts, warm feelings, passionate prayers in which idle people indulge themselves." Again Coleridge anticipates Newman in his thoughts on religion and the world of science. "Nature excites belief by perpetual revelation. Conscience peremptorily demands it It could not be intellectually more evident without becoming morally less effective; without counteracting its own end by sacrificing the life of faith to the cold mechanism of a worthless, because compulsory assent The organs

of sense are framed for a world of sense which we have; of spirit for a world of spirit which we do not know entire." Wonderfully prophetic is this of Newman's remarks many years later, to the students of the medical school in Dublin: "The physical nature lies before us, patent to the sight, ready to the touch, appealing to the senses in so unequivocal a way that the science which is founded upon it is as real to us as the fact of our personal existence. But the phenomena, which are the basis of morals and Religion, have nothing of this luminous evidence. Instead of being intruded upon our notice, so that we cannot possibly overlook them, they are dictates either of Conscience or of Faith." Thus, also, Coleridge anticipated in large measure Newman's dependence on personality. "In energetic minds," he says, "truth soon changes by domestication into power."

It is merely another way of asserting personality as the mainstay of religion. "We proceed from the self," says Coleridge, "in order to find all self in God." So similarly Newman, beginning with the self-evident fact of his own being, deduces God and submerges his own will in the divine will. Both, in other words, recognizing the will as the spiritual part of their nature, deduce will or conscience in others. Coleridge, in his "Aphorisms on Spiritual Religion," Newman in his *University Sermons*, especially those on "Implicit and Explicit Reason" and on "The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason," base their arguments upon this universal consciousness of the inherent spiritual in man. Faith, therefore, is grounded on the belief of conscience in others; this belief, in turn, based on the individual's absolute knowledge of conscience in himself. Newman says, "If Reason is the faculty of gaining knowledge upon grounds given, an act or process of Faith is an exercise of Reason, as being an instrument of indirect knowledge concerning things external to us." Coleridge had said before him, "Unless, then, we have some distinct notion of the Will, . . . an insight into the nature of Spiritual Religion is hardly possible."

To both men it was essential first to recognize will, then to bring that will into accord with the divine will,

represented in conscience. To both, the great and good men of history, through their personalities, were the strongest evidence of faith. To both, this divine manifestation, taken collectively, exhibited the personality, through the ages, of the Founder of our Religion. Each hesitated to argue for the truth of separate articles of faith, the Trinity or the inspiration of the Scriptures. It was enough to prove the reality of Faith as a sufficient answer to objections. In the mind of Coleridge the question never arose as to whether the Anglican Church was or was not the valid repository of dogmas. Had he lived longer this problem might have confronted him as it did Newman. What his answer would have been no man can say, but surely here the dreams of Schilling and Novalis would not have led his reason to Rome, and emotionally he had at home what they had not, a Church claiming apostolic succession and as beautiful in its ritual as was the Roman Church.

These correspondencies, then, serve simply to show that, in their common search for truth, these two Englishmen, acted upon by quite dissimilar reasoning, proceeded together a long distance step by step; that their development was the result of the whole intellectual atmosphere of the time, not of any particular influence. Coleridge, however, was the theorist who had neither the intellectual nor the moral purposefulness to carry his theories to a conclusion. Parallel paths may diverge at any moment. Newman, at least, should be honored for following his vision of the truth steadfastly although it led him away from friends and his own English Church.

Since Coleridge is often spoken of as the typical figure of the Romantic School, and since Newman is so much like him, it is obvious that we must class the great religious thinker also as typical, not, like Milton, as a solitary enthusiast in a jarring world. "A mediæval ecclesiastic astray in the nineteenth century," he has been called, and except for the verb the phrase is not as misleading, not as contradictory as at first sight appears. Shelley had much of the Elizabethan lyric fervor and also was a modern radical. The picture of the boy preaching the doctrine of liberty in Ireland reminds one inevitably of the young, hot-mouthed enthusiasts of Jack Cade's Rebellion. Scott lived in

an atmosphere of romance, was a Jacobite in theory, but was also a loyal subject of King George. He dispensed mediæval hospitality to modern lawyers and up-to-date farmers in a mediæval castle that was built with the good sovereigns poured by a novel-reading public in the lap of their favorite author. Chatterton produced early English poetry in a modern London tenement. Yet these men by reason of their very inconsistencies were supremely in accord with their times.

Newman, too, was mediæval — there was something of it in all the Romanticists — an ecclesiastic, full of mediæval reverence for the authority, the catholicity, the apostolic dignity of the Church; but like his fellows he was modern also. He was keenly alive to present-day conditions, to the eager, earnest life of his own times, to the significance of scientific progress, and his aim was to correlate the two ideas. Religion, as represented by the fundamentally unchangeable Church of the Apostles, must be upheld because it was truth. Science must be upheld because it, too, was truth. Often the two seemed opposed but the conflict must be only apparent for there could be no real divergence between different aspects of truth. In this, then, Newman differed from the mediæval ecclesiastics who would have burned Charles Darwin at the stake. The priest of the nineteenth century realized that time would prove or disprove new theories, that among new errors lay yet undiscovered truths. No far-shining reflection from fires in which heretics were burning was needed, in his opinion, to keep the ship of religion from foundering on the rocks of science. Rather would these very rocks make of themselves breakwaters to protect the ship. No less than his brother of the fourteenth century did he bow to the authority of the Church, but he saw in this authority a moral, not a physical force. The truths of religion were elemental, capable of infinite development, of adaptation to all possible phases of human reason. They were, moreover, a necessary check on the vagaries of this reason, a sure support in times of perplexity. Discoveries in science, if real, not chimerical, were no more antagonistic to Christianity than were the developments made within the Church itself — were quite the opposite, in fact, since they hastened internal development.

There is, and always has been a divine economy as there is a human economy in imparting religious truths. Had there not been this economy, development would have been impossible, and as development, historical, spiritual, in personality, was the framework of Newman's theology he was naturally compelled to accept the economy as its corollary. In this acceptance lies one of the Protestant's chief grievances. The very word "economy" in religion seems to him to have some sinister meaning. Newman's doctrine was not one imposed upon him by the Catholic Church but was, instead, one which he later found consonant with Catholic teaching. Briefly it was this: In the Christian revelation enshrined in the New Testament were given the essentials of dogma. Primitive Christians were like children; they understood the truth only dimly and in part. As years to the child, so were centuries to the Church. As each year brings new knowledge to the child so each century brought new knowledge to the Church. The child begins life encompassed by the great truths of existence; the Church began life encompassed by the eternal verities of religion. The child, as it begins to reason, grows inwardly in knowledge; the Church, as it began to reason, grew inwardly in wisdom. To the child the light of the sun finally resolves itself into the multitudinous facts of light as the source of life; to the Church the truth of the Incarnation finally resolved itself into the multitudinous aspects of God's love. The child stumbles on some naked truth which it cannot comprehend and its father suppresses the thought until the little mind can take in its meaning; the Church comes face to face with some unexpected law of science and the supreme authority withholds knowledge of the law until the members have grown in wisdom so they can fit it into its proper place in the scheme of religion. As the child grows older the father withdraws his authority, allowing the man to meet and conquer difficulties for himself, strong in his inbred righteousness; as the Church has grown older the supreme authority has had to intervene less and less often, knowing that the members have so grown in wisdom that they can meet new truths and force them unaided into their proper relations. The economy of God is divine, of the parent human;

both are founded on knowledge of the heart, and of the intellect; both wish to prepare the growing mind for adequate reception of the truth. When the youth, for example, catches from a chance word, uttered perhaps by an ignoble man, some sacred fact concerning the origin of life, the wise father embraces gladly the opportunity it gives him for explanation. So when a Christian meets in the writing of a scientist some fact concerning geology or natural history, the all-wise Church accepts gladly the opportunity to explain the new truth in the light of Christian dogma. Only when the mind is immature is there hesitation in either case. Such was Newman's doctrine of the economy. It is the old reliance on personality carried out in exquisite detail. It was, although not as clearly stated, the idea Coleridge had held, that faith must often accept as truth facts with which human reason is incompetent to deal. He, like Newman, recognized the difference between the reason which accepts and the reason which defines.

It is impossible in either Coleridge or Newman to get away from the concrete. Subtle as was their reasoning it was never abstract in the sense that it omitted concrete proof. They thought in similes, and the similes were the realities of life, in Newman's case often of his own life, though seldom so specified. The result was, that because to Newman religion was alive, it was possible to bring it into harmony with the best among the chaotic impulses of the world. Religion was a giant that had been asleep during the eighteenth century, and that had awakened in the nineteenth, not to the proverbial inertia of the giant, but rather alert, keen-eyed, kindly and yet with "the strength of ten." It was no dead machine, bound to be thrown out of order by the introduction of foreign matter, but a vital and vitalizing organism, capable of absorbing and of giving out, of turning all things to its own uses, of crushing if necessary, but preferring to assimilate, certain that in the process the poison would be thrown out and only the nutritious remain. The giant of science was not its enemy but its long unsuspected friend. All things must bow to its will because that will was divine and because its fiat were just. Evil was its only enemy and at last even the powers of evil would be brought

into subjection. For a time they might lop away a limb but a new would grow in its place and the old one wither, cut off from the source of life. And this source of life, what was it but the spirit of Christ invigorating His Church from the beginning; the mighty, pulsing heart of His chosen representative? But here Newman thought beyond Coleridge. No more than the human heart would this divine heart send the vital element coursing through the veins of a separated member. The *Via Media* was an attempt to prove the Anglican Church the true representative of God. The "Essay on Development" led its author to transfer his allegiance to Rome. He could not escape the logical cogency of his own arguments.

Consciously or unconsciously, then, the framework of Newman's reasoning was analogy, and such reasoning is always largely an act of the imagination. This detracts not at all from its validity. The greatest achievements of men have had their origin in the imagination—as distinguished, of course, from the fancy. This was the power which enabled Newman to grasp intuitively the significance of a vast and apparently disconnected series of facts, to penetrate the inmost meaning of events of history. His method was historical, one phase of that marvelous school of history which sprang into being early in the last century. It was a combination of the deductive and of the inductive. He took a sentence from a Father, a decree from a Council, a papal pronouncement, and from these established a position. It was not final. His whole attitude was, "Is not this a reasonable ground?" If the position proved untenable, no harm was done. No assertion of finality had been made for it and even in retreat something new was learned; the thinker had gained sight of new vantage points which might prove of service. Newman's intellectual career was therefore one of bold attacks and equally bold retreats; very different from and far more illuminating than the stolid advance of the unimaginative man who hesitates, weighs possibilities in the balance of pure reason, never raises his eyes to the sun-warmed heights. The analogy expressed in the sermon on "Implicit and Explicit Reason" serves admirably as an explanation of Newman's own manner of thinking. "One fact may suffice for

a whole theory; one principle may create and sustain a system; one minute token is a clue to a large discovery. The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation It is not too much to say that the stepping, by which great geniuses scale the mountains of truth, is as unsafe and precarious to men in general, as the ascent of a skillful mountaineer up a literal crag. It is a way which they alone can take, and its justification lies in their success Reasoning . . . is a living spontaneous energy within us, not an art." Such was Newman as a thinker — and even so he brings us again to the idea of "living energy," of personality.

Finally it must be admitted that all who were fortunate enough to know the man, that all who in this twentieth century, strive to know him through his writings, find complete vindication of the theory which was the very core of his work, in the moving fascination of his personality. The friends who knew him loved him; his auditors were entranced by the quiet, somewhat monotonous voice that fell like a caress from the pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford, and later from that in the chapel of the Birmingham Oratory. The impulsive energy of Hurrell Froude was restrained and clarified in his companionship. The serene and scholarly Keble was roused and strengthened by his example. The gentle Ambrose St. John regarded him as a father and as a brother, as a rock of refuge which no storms could touch. All those who took the trouble to know him, whether they differed from him or not, loved him as man. And this fascination was not passive self-surrender. He made men think; he made them act. Why? Newman was living like King Arthur or St. Francis of Assisi to us in this twentieth century, remote; and yet, like these, he touches our very hearts.

In a worldly sense he was a lonely man. In a spiritual sense he was a man self-absorbed yet at the same time swallowed up in God. In the most secret chamber of the soul of every man there is a shrine from which even the closest earthly friends are excluded. Sometimes this shrine is naked and dark; then in-

deed a man is lonely. Sometimes an earthly love profanes it; then perhaps the man imagines himself happy — but it is tortured happiness. Fear of dishonor, of love grown cold, of death, flashes across his vision and he can find no peace. Sometimes, however, there appears a man like Newman who admits God to this secret chapel; who keeps the floors and the walls and the ceiling burnished; who lights the altar with candles and swings the incense perpetually. To such a man there is no fear of dishonor, of love grown cold, of death. To such a man comes “the peace which passeth understanding.” Companions may complain that they are not admitted to closest intimacy — but should a man be jealous of God? In the case of Newman, men opened their whole hearts to him and he responded, keeping locked only the door of the sanctuary. He had the good fortune to be understood and therefore to be revered as well as loved. He lived in a holy isolation, not in loneliness of spirit, and whatever his struggles may have been he had always that inward peace which came through faith that God dwelt in him, that the voice of conscience was an echo of that “still, small voice” which spoke to Elijah. He might be “fierce” as he says he was; he might be bitterly ironical; he might sometimes appear to hesitate. His friends knew that the “fierceness” was caused by the imperious demands of that inner voice; that the irony was a God-given weapon; that the hesitation was the period of silence during which he listened for the word. Years passed before Newman was sure that he had found the haven. Owing to his reliance on conscience he did not distrust himself. He felt also that there were and had been others who had been divinely led and who, more perfectly than he, had excluded the wranglings and tumult of the world. Such men he found in the early fathers and when at last it became clear that, as God had spoken in their hearts, He had spoken in the hearts of saintly men in the Church of all ages; when in addition to this he became convinced that the leaders of the Reformation had drawn away from that voice, there was but one course for him to follow. In 1845 he entered the Catholic Church and from that time the rare sweetness of expression betokening spiritual peace, the sweetness that only his closest

friends, in the times of strife and misunderstandings, had seen and marveled at, became the dominant note in that supremely intellectual face.

Such, and much more, was Cardinal Newman, the most profound religious student of the century and the writer of perhaps the most delicately modulated prose in the language. His life, his thinking, his writing, were rounded out and complete. Pathetically different is the picture of Coleridge. Where Newman thought to a conclusion, Coleridge left his work half finished, chaotic in its incompleteness. Where Newman gave as much of himself to his friends as he could and gave for their good, Coleridge talked for his own pleasure and was selfishly absorbed. "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battles; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there." Newman, even in retirement, never escaped from the battle except to commune with his own soul and even then was ready always with a helpful word and a brave thought. He was always noble in life; Coleridge was sometimes ignoble. The two never came into contact. The work of Coleridge never consciously influenced Newman. And yet the two, one gropingly, the other surely, thought the same great thoughts, had the same uplifting aspirations. If Newman never read him, others in Oxford did, and perhaps without those stirring fragments the leader of the Oxford Movement would not have moved the people as he did. No man can explain the beneficent, unconscious inter-relations of history, the impulses, arising seemingly out of nothing that sets a man to prepare the way for another whom he will never know and who will hardly hear of him.

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